COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS

STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

Pre-Deployment Resilience Training for Spouses/Couples

Challenges of Military Life

- Frequent military deployments
- Frequent training exercises
- Long duty days
- Weekend duty
- Frequent military moves (PCS)
- Fear of death and/or serious injury
- Distance from extended Family
- Family separations

Benefits of Military Life

- Financial stability; retirement benefits
- Health care
- Commissary and PX privileges
- Community and a sense of belonging
- Education and job training
- Overseas assignments, new experiences
- Opportunity to serve

Preparing for a Deployment

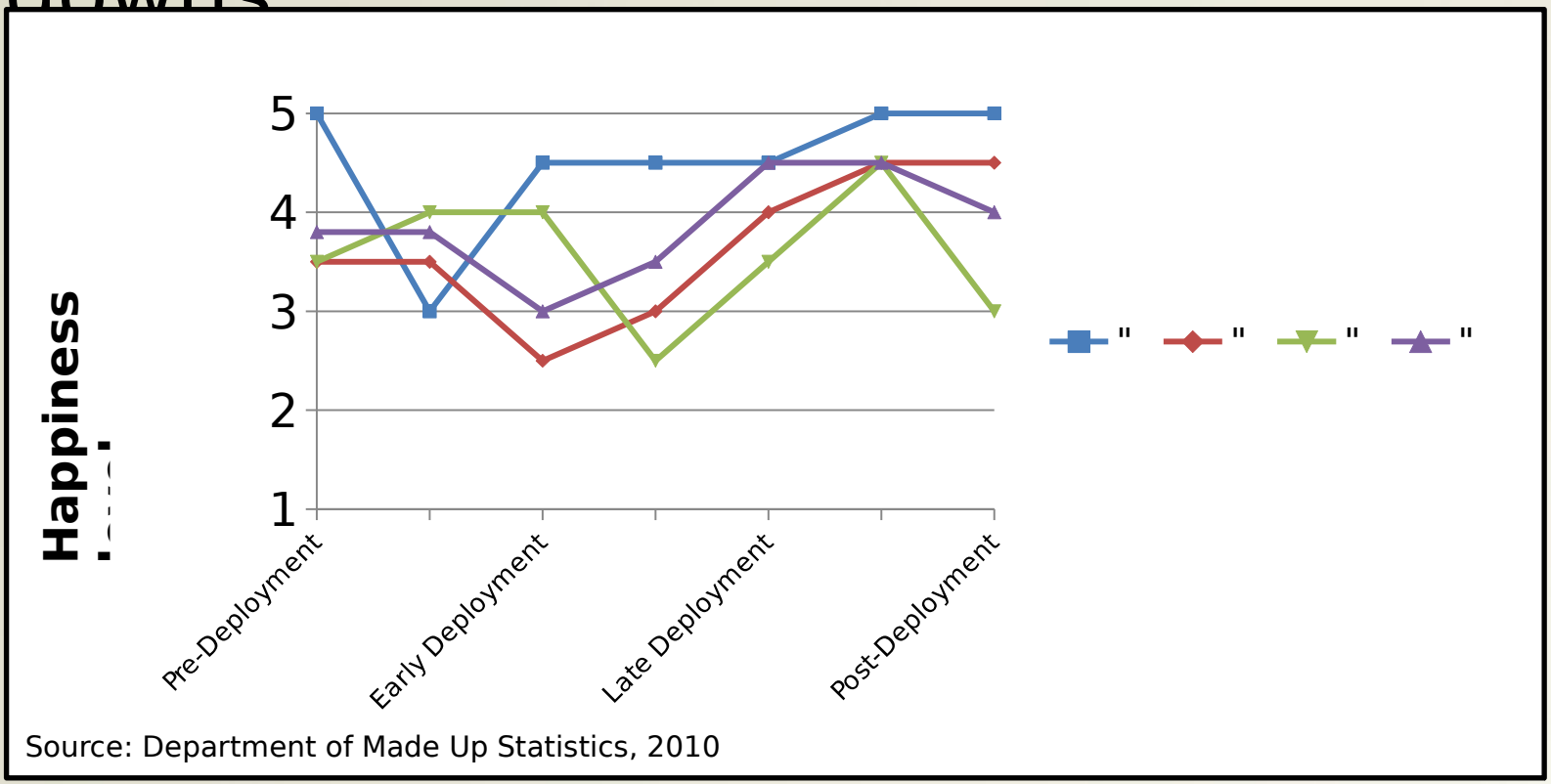
Your **Family** is about to experience a deployment...

Preparing for a Deployment

- What will it be like?
- How can you prepare?
  - Have you talked as a Family about the deployment?
  - Have you identified different ups and downs each Family member may experience?

Practice Practical Optimism

- Remember ups and downs are normal
- Everyone has their own ups and downs



Source: Department of Made Up Statistics, 2010

Multiple Deployments

- Even for Families who have deployed before, each deployment may be different

The "Big Chill"

- Just before the deployment, Family communication can be strained, short and emotional
- Why is the "Big Chill" so common?
- Keep communication open to avoid the "Big Chill"
- Start early, communicating while deployed can be challenging

Deployment Communication

- Communicate - maintain intimacy
  - Compliment and encourage each other
    - Be specific and use “I” statements
  - Talk about each other as a couple
    - Reinforce your sense of being a couple/Family
  - Build connections
    - Write love letters
    - Send cards (*for important & unimportant occasions*)
    - Give presents

Deployment Communication

- Communicate in creative ways
  - Bridge communication between kids and the d parent
  - Keep the deployed Soldier in the "event" loop

- What have you done that works?

Click for video

Deployment Communication

- E-mail offers a chance to communicate
  - *and mis-communicate*
- Negative comments can stick like glue
- How could someone interpret the following?
  - *"It's great to finally hear from you."*
  - *"I wish you were here."*
  - *"We're all doing just fine."*
  - *"I've made a new friend."*

Click for video

Deployment Communication

- What can you do to minimize misunderstandings?
  - Write what you mean
  - Consider waiting before writing an emotionally-charged e-mail
  - Re-read before hitting the send button
  - Give each other the benefit of the doubt
    - When in doubt, ask
- E-mails can be a great morale booster

Deployment Communication

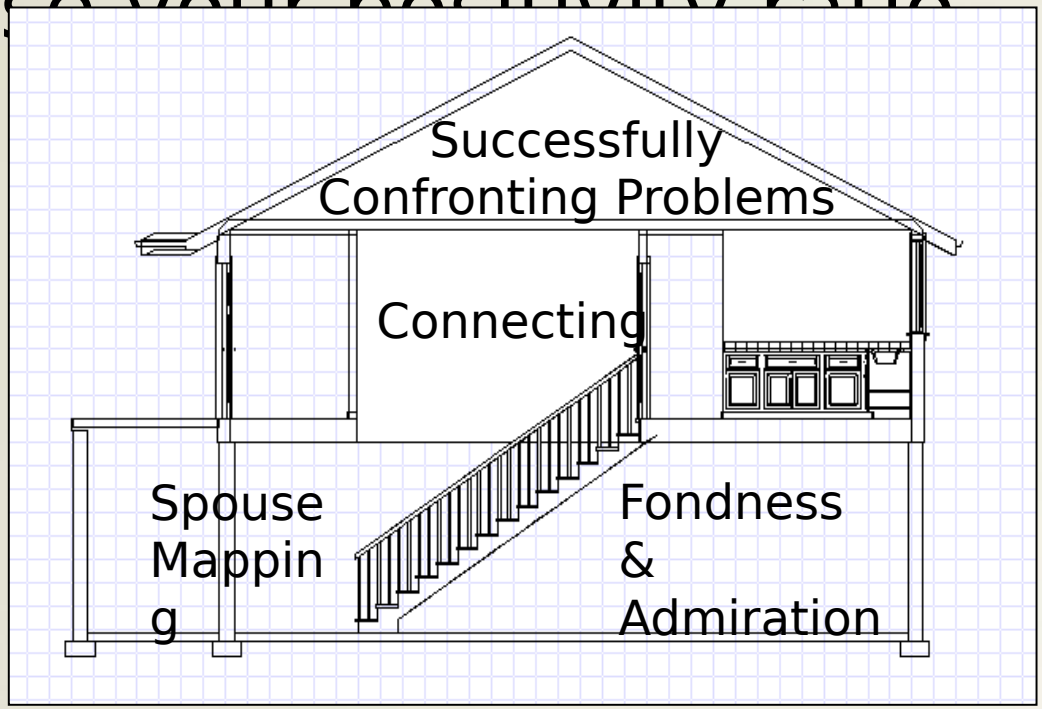
- How much information will you share with each other during the deployment?
- Many Soldiers do not want to share all the details of the deployment
  - Deployment boundaries do not mean the Soldier is rejecting their Spouse or loved ones
- Many Spouses don't want to burden the deployed Soldier with Family details

Relationship Resilience

- How can you become a more resilient Army Family?
  - Improve your relationship resilience before you deploy
  - Keep building your "*Sound Marital House*"

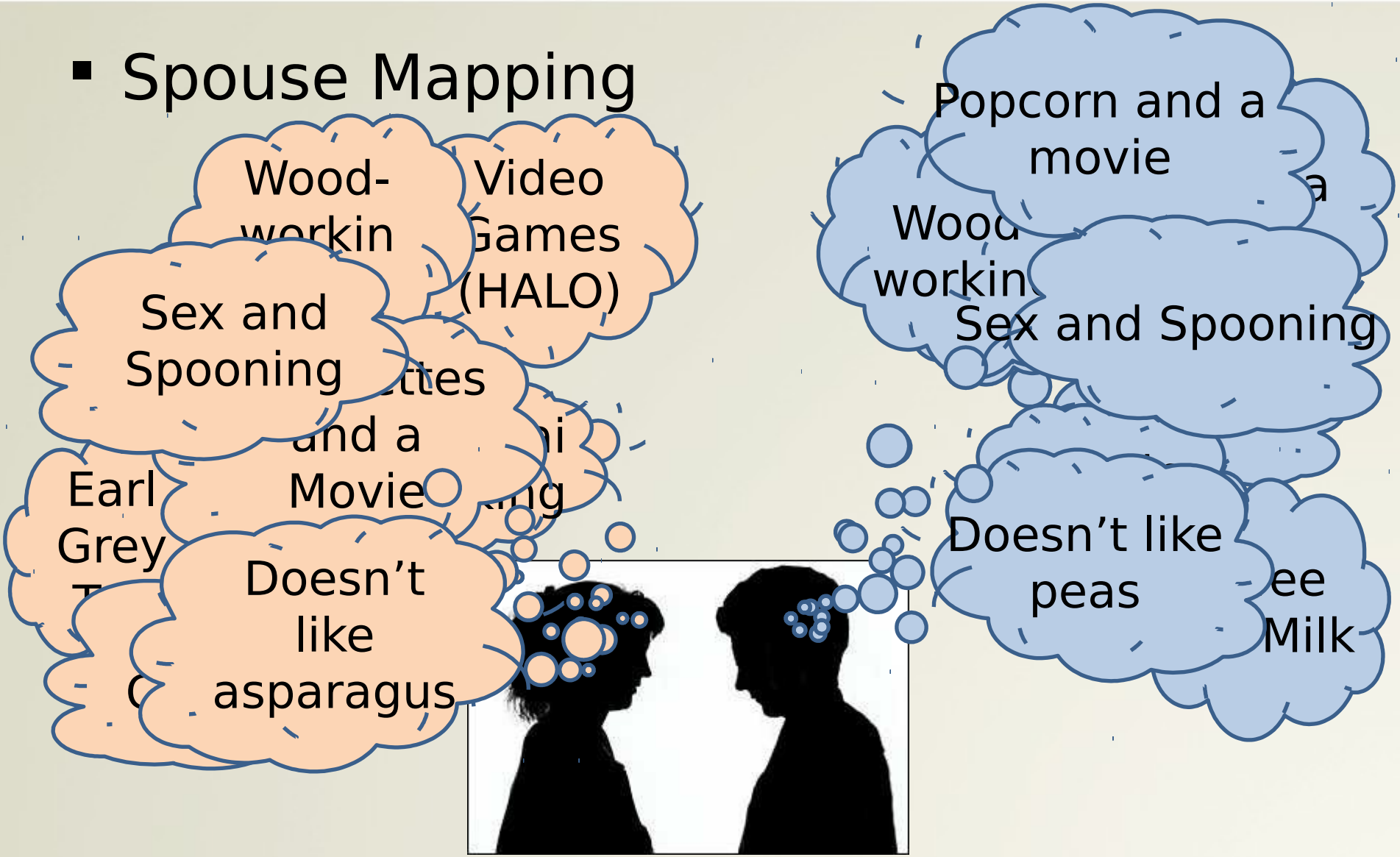
Sound Marital House: Loving Friendship

- Create a loving friendship
- Learn to confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



Loving Friendship

- Spouse Mapping



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Loving Friendship

- Fondness and Admiration
  - Reinforce by remembering your Spouse's contributions to the relationship
  - Focus on thoughts about your Spouse
    - What initially attracted you
    - What currently attracts you
  - How do you use Fondness and Admiration your loving frie

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Your Positivity Ratio

- Connecting - like money in the bank
- Increase your positive daily interactions with your Spouse
  - Enhances the quality of your relationship
  - Shortens and smoothes out the disagreements
  - Reduces the stress in relationship

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Activity: Loving Friendship

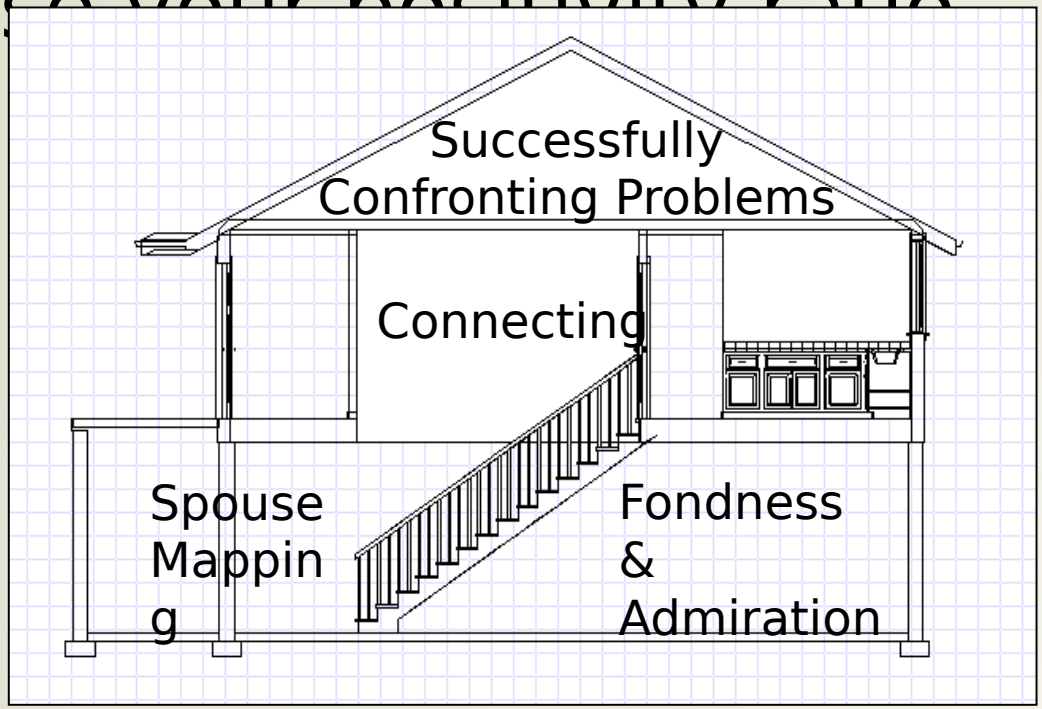
- List 5 things you remember about your Spouse that you admired or found attractive when you first started dating each other
- List 5 things you currently admire or appreciate about your Spouse
- Activity Time: 10 minutes

Activity: Loving Friendship

- Debrief

Sound Marital House: Confronting Problems

- Create a loving friendship
- Learn to confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Confronting Problems

- Adapt your own thinking
- Make Repair Attempts
- Use Gentle Starts

Confronting Problems

- You can use the ATC model to adapt your own thinking when problems arise

Adapting Your Thinking

- ATC Model

Activating **E**vent:
The trigger: adversity, a challenge or positive event

Thoughts:
Your interpretations of the **A**ctivating Event; what you say to yourself at the time

Consequences: **ER**
Emotions
Reactions

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Activating Events

- Your child takes his/her first steps
- Your Spouse sends flowers when you get a new job
- The car breaks down
- Your child gets into trouble at school
- You're 7,000 miles apart on your 1st anniversary
- It's bedtime, you're tired and your kids want a story
- You're having an "on-line" argument with each other
- You won a trip for two to Tahiti

Adapting Your Thinking

Activating Event:
Soldier returns from a training exercise and snaps at Spouse

Thoughts:
" He's always in a bad mood. He thinks he's the only one getting stressed out about the deployment. He's so self-centered."

Consequences:
Emotions: Anger, bitterness
Reactions: Argue, retaliate, yell

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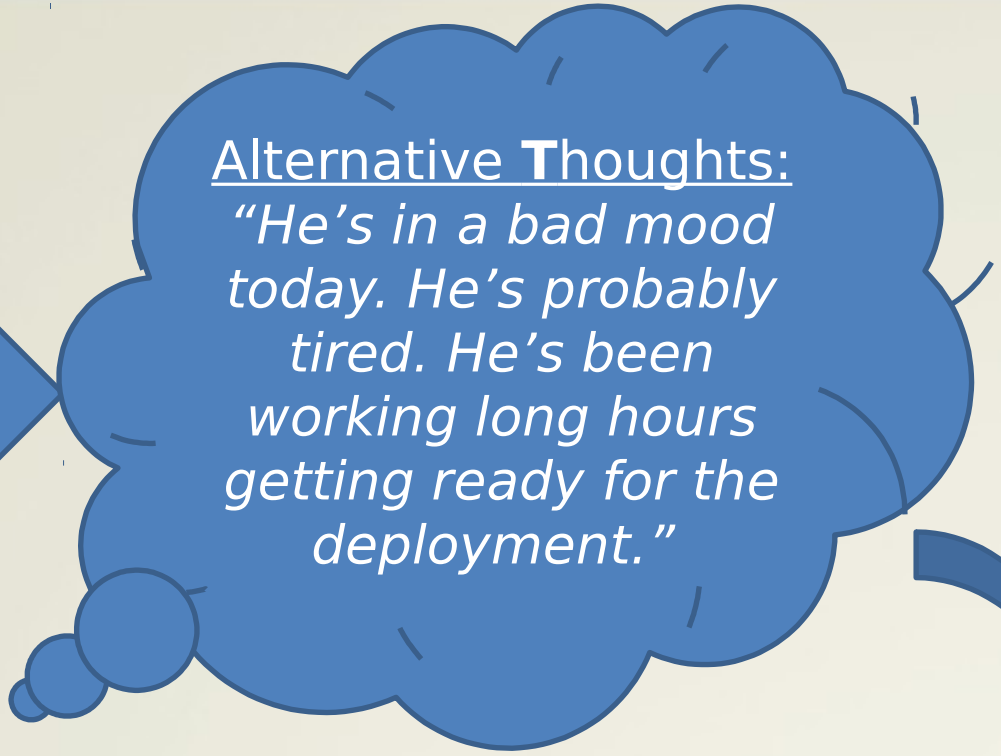
Adapting Your Thinking

Activating Event:
Soldier returns from a training exercise and snaps at Spouse


Alternative Thoughts:
"He's in a bad mood today. He's probably tired. He's been working long hours getting ready for the deployment."

Consequences:
Emotions: Caring, sympathy
Reactions: Patience, affection, support

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Thinking Traps

- Thinking Traps are overly rigid patterns in thinking that can cause us to miss critical information about a situation or person
- Identify your Thinking Traps so you can correct your thinking in the moment and avoid future traps

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Thinking Traps

- Always, Always, Always
- Jumping to Conclusions
- Mind Reading

- There are other Thinking Traps but these are the ones we're going to focus on today…

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Thinking Traps

- Always, Always, Always: Believing that all problems are unchangeable, will always be that way, and you have little or no control over them
- Action: Grab control
- Critical Questions:
  - What can I control?
  - What do I have to accept?
- Counter helplessness with understanding what you can and cannot control

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Thinking Traps

- Jumping to Conclusions: Being certain about a situation despite having little or no evidence to support it
- Action: Slow Down
- Critical Question:
  - What's the evidence?
- Counter Jumping to Conclusions with verifying information

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Thinking Traps

- Mind Reading: Assuming you know what the other person is thinking, or expecting another person to know what you are thinking
- Action: Speak up
- Critical Questions:
  - Did I express myself clearly?
  - Did I ask for information?
- Counter your assumptions by asking questions

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Activity: Thinking Traps

Trap Examples	Consequence	Counter
I'm not going to adjust to the deployment	Sad, anxious, act withdrawn	Be clear in telling your Spouse about your day
She didn't bring me coffee – she doesn't care about me	Irritated, act angry	Consider other reasons
He should have known I had a bad day	Disappointed, act distant and	Make a plan, accept what you have to

Confronting Problems

- You can use Repair Attempts and Gentle Starts to make relationships more resilient when problems arise

Confronting Problems

- Sometimes communications hit a speed bump
- Make and accept "*Repair Attempts*"
  - An attempt to defuse the tension
  - Examples: agreeing to disagree, gentle banter, sticking out tongue, funny statements like "*drop and give me twenty*," making a face
- Accept your partner's influence
- Directly confronting problems…

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Confronting Problems

How we say it is as important as what we say

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Confronting Problems

- Gentle Start:
  - Time your communication
  - Limit your concern to a specific complaint
  - Don’t store complaints and unload them all at once
  - Use “I” Statements: “*I feel* _____*when you* ____*; I would prefer if you would* ____.”
  - Choose the right emotional tone

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Confronting Problems

- Harsh Start:
  - Begin with a negative or accusatory tone
  - Jump immediately to criticism and/or contempt
  - Use “The Four Horsemen”

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

The Four Horsemen

- The Four Horsemen:
  - Criticism
  - Contempt
  - Defensiveness
  - Stonewalling

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Criticism vs. Kindness

- Definition: A global complaint that typically includes a personality or character attack
- Event: Your Spouse came home late from the field and left their stinky ACUs on the bathroom floor
  - Criticism: *"You're such a slob! You never pick up after yourself!"*
  - Kind Request: *"I know you're tired from being in the field. I would appreciate it if you would leave your dirty clothes by the washing machine."*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Contempt vs. Respect

- Definition: Mocking attitude or sarcasm that typically includes moral disgust
- Event: Your Spouse buys some things for you at Ranger Ricks; you respond with…
  - Contempt: *"Don't spend my money on worthless S#&t."*
  - Respectful Request: *"I appreciate that you were thinking of me but I'm concerned about our budget. I would prefer it if we stuck to the budget we agreed on."*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Defensiveness vs. Acknowledgement

- Definition: Warding off a perceived attack rather than listening to the concern
- Event: A Soldier says, "*You never support me and come to unit functions*"
  - Defensiveness: "*That's not true. You never tell me in time to make arrangements.*"
  - Acknowledging Need for Improvement: "*I want to support you but you're right, I don't like unit functions. I usually feel shy and don't know what to say. I'll work*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Stonewalling vs. Attending

- Definition: Withdrawing from an argument rather than listening or talking about a problem
- Event: You arrive late for dinner; you didn't call, and your Spouse says she's not happy with your behavior
  - Stonewalling: *Looking away, the silent treatment, walking out on the conversation*
  - Attending to Unpleasant Topics: *Pay attention with eye contact and body language*

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Activity: The Four Horsemen

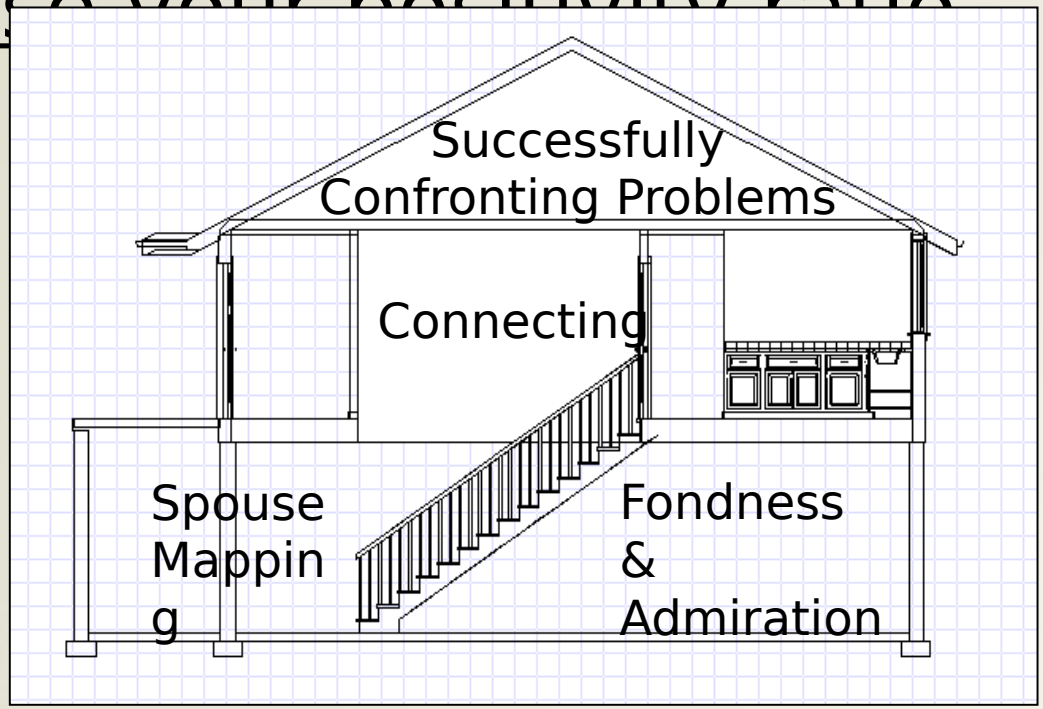
- Divide into groups of 2 or 3
- Work through 3 scenarios in your student handout
- Look for ways to use a Gentle Start and avoid a Harsh Start and The Four Horsemen
- Complete the student handout
- Activity Time: 10-15 minutes

Activity: The Four Horsemen

- Debrief

Sound Marital House: Your Positivity Ratio

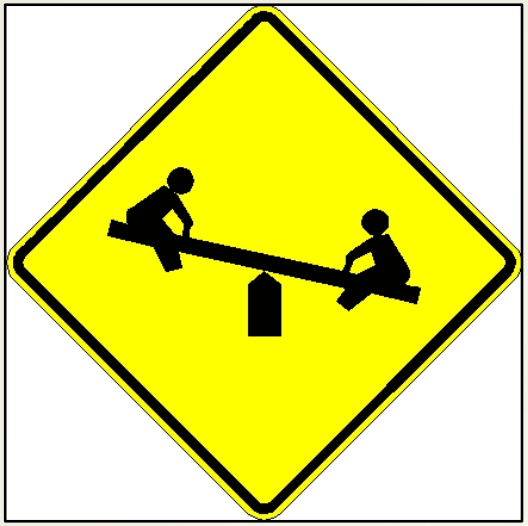
- Create a loving friendship
- Learn to confront problems successfully
- Increase your positivity ratio



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Your Positivity Ratio

- Your "Positivity Ratio" is the way you:
  - Think about your Spouse
  - Feel about your Spouse
  - Connect with your Spouse
- Unhappy Couples - *0.8:1*
- Happy Couples - *5:1*



NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Your Positivity Ratio: Unhappy Couples

Scraped most of the ice fro[m] s[po]u[se]'s

Kissed before leaving for work

Complained my Spo[u]se forgo[t] to

Refilled my coffee but [d]idn't [o]ffe[r] Sp[ouse]

Watched TV instead of listening to Spouse

*.8:1

Your Positivity Ratio: Happy Couples

Scrape ice fr

Appreciated how much we've gone through together

m

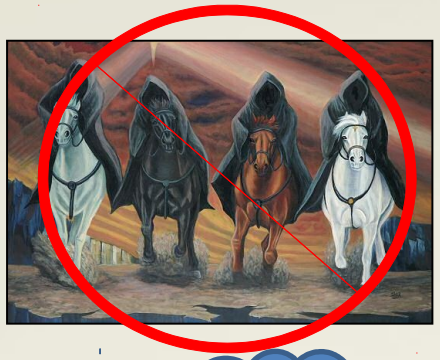
Kisse before leavin fo

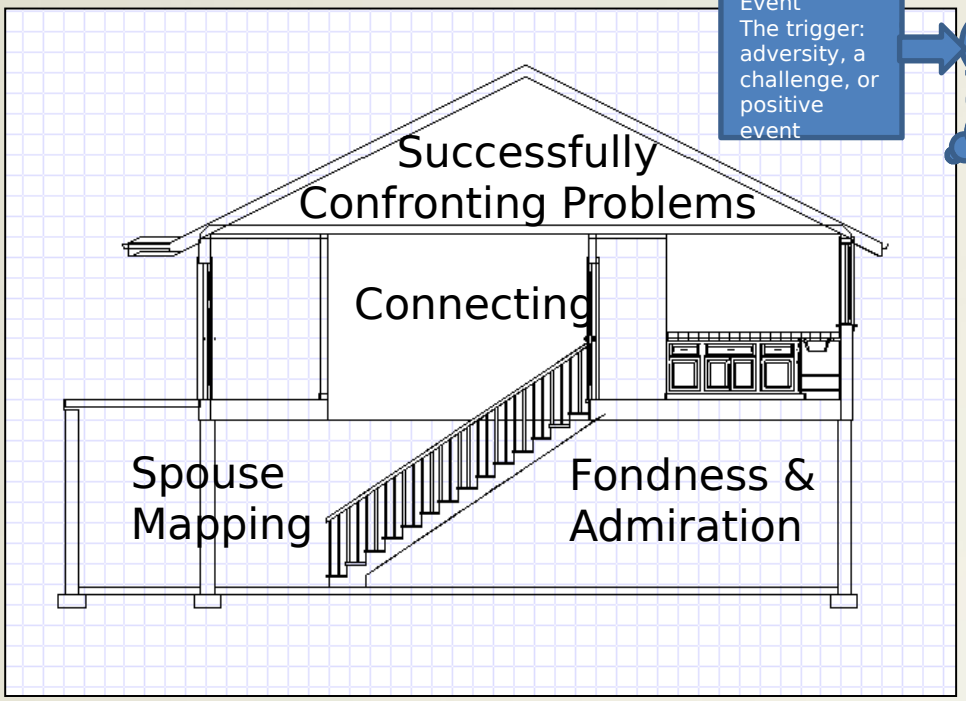
Said "I love you" to Spouse

Complained my Spouse forgot to take out the garbage

5:1

Sound Marital House: Summary





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Consequences: ER
- **E**motions
- **R**eactions

NOTE: Adapted from Gottman

Personal and Relationship Growth

- Appreciating each other
- Gaining renewed admiration for each other
- Practicing new ways of connecting
- Being a role model of independence
- Mastering new tasks (*cooking, car maintenance*)
- Becoming fluent in “Army”

Strengths and Skills

What other strengths and skills does your Family have to face the demands of a deployment?

Support

- Build up a social support network
- Use community supports

Navigating the Army

- Network
  - Use rear detachment/FRG resources
- The “truth” changes (policies, local differences & rumor)
  - Get information from credible sources
  - Double check hours and location of services
- Track key paperwork and documents (and keep them up-to-date)
- Until it happens – it may not happen
- Don’t necessarily accept the first answer – get a second opinion and/or get it writing
- Keep your sense of humor
- The Army UALOA

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STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES

Thank-You